The Education of Third-Culture Asian Students in American International Schools in Malaysia and Singapore: A Perspective of Teachers and Counselors

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Abstract

Eugene W. Armistead III: The Education of Third-Culture Asian Students in American International Schools in Malaysia and Singapore: A Perspective of Teachers and Counselors
(Under the direction of Dr. Xue Rong)

An increasing number of people in our world are growing up crossing national and cultural boundaries on a regular basis. This profoundly affects their perception of culture. Many of these individuals, whether they are American or not, depend on American international schools (AISs) to meet their educational needs. The primary goal of AISs is to provide an American style education for American expatriates. This presents a unique situation for students of other nationalities at the school. They have the option of participating in this "American cultural bubble" along with their American counterparts. This study explores the effects of this environment on Asian students from the viewpoint of their teachers and counselors.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

An increasing number of people in our world are growing up crossing national and cultural boundaries on a regular basis. This profoundly affects their perception of culture as well as their process. Some do not readily identify with any particular culture group, but there is a growing number that have chosen to do so. They call themselves Biculturals, Third Culture Kids (TCKs), Trans-Culture Kids, or Global Nomads. Many of these students receive their education in American international schools (AISs) whether they are Americans or not. While there is some disagreement over which label people may choose for these children, there seems to be more agreement on how to define the concept – the Third Culture Kid.

"Third Culture Kid" Definition

"A TCK (insert Global Nomad or other terms) is an individual who, spending a significant part of his or her developmental years (usually the years before their 18th birthday) in another culture other than that of his or her parents, develops some sense of belonging to both the host culture and the home culture, while not having a sense of total ownership in either. Elements from both (or multiple) cultures are blended, resulting in the third culture" (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999, p. 19). This cross-cultural experience occurs during the years that children's sense of identity, relationships with others, and their views of the world are being formed in the most basic ways (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). The term "Third Culture Kid" was first coined by John and Ruth Hill Useem in

the 1950's while they were in India studying Americans who were working there as teachers, missionaries, businessmen, or foreign service workers (Straffon, 2003)

It is important to point out that TCKs are different from immigrants. They do not move to another country for the purpose of settling there permanently. Usually they move with the idea in mind that they will one day return to their country of origin (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). They also frequently move from place to place; therefore, frequent transitions are a fact of life for TCKs. "Because of the high mobility inherent in their lifestyle, TCKs go through major transitions far more frequently than those born and raised in one basic area… TCKs usually change cultures as well as places. This increases the degree of impact from that experience as the issues related to what is commonly referred to as culture shock are piled on top of the normal stress of any transition" (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999, p. 62).

An old joke among TCKs and their teachers is, "How do you confuse a TCK? Ask him where he's from." For most TCKs speaking of being "from" anywhere is problematic. To ensure that the meaning of "from" is clear, the use of the word will be defined by where a student's parents have spent most of their developmental years and the nationality with which they prefer to identify. This will not necessarily be the same answer as the child may give since many TCKs do not identify with the culture of their parents (Gillies, 1998). It is also important to understand that "from" is also not a concrete term since many adult TCKs (ATCKs) choose to live their lives crossing cultural and geographic borders on a regular basis. They also tend to find the term "from" inadequate (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999).

It should be emphasized that the TCK experience carries on into adulthood as mentioned above. ATCKs often exhibit characteristics such as openness to other cultures,

openness and ease in learning new languages, general satisfaction living abroad, maintaining geographically mobile lives, and an interest in international careers (Gerner & Perry, 2001).

The use of the word “home” or especially “home country” is confusing and inadequate when talking about this group of students. A useful alternative term often used when speaking about TCKs is “passport country” indicating only the country on the child's passport. This also limits the possible confusion of birthplace or origin since some TCKs are born outside the country of their parents. The term may imply that a TCK's passport country may mean nothing more to them than that: simply the name of the place on a piece of personal documentation. It may be that this is an accurate description of the feeling many of these students have regarding the country where their parents were born.

The TCK phenomenon is not unique to North American expatriate children. Japan is probably more advanced compared to the US in understanding these individuals as they have been publicly exploring a similar phenomenon in their society since the early to mid 1970's. In Japanese society, children with experiences like TCKs are often referred to as *kaigai/kikoku-shijos* or overseas/returning children. While there are some differences between the two fields of study, there are also many similarities. Such similarities indicates that the field that studies the children of transnational families is growing (Podolsky, 2004; Rong, 2005). This paper primarily uses the TCK concept as a lens for studying these individuals.

American International Schools Outside the United States

AISs outside the US provide an education for the children of American expatriates as well as a number of children of other nationalities. What exactly is an AIS

in the overseas setting? Generally they fall into two categories. One of the more common types of AISs would be a Department of Defense Dependent School (DoDDS) (Ortloff & Escobar-Ortloff, 2002). These are fairly uniform around the world considering their common purpose and less diverse student population. DoDDS schools are put in place for the families of the US military and other government employees. The second type of school is the independent school which may be either for-profit or, in the case of sectarian and religious schools, receives support from a stateside religious organization. The second type generally has a far more diverse student population than the DoDDSs since it is financially dependent in one way or another on some form of tuition paid by the parents (Ortloff & Escobar-Ortloff, 2002; Coeyman, 2002). This paper will be looking at the student population of independent schools.

An important aspect of overseas AISs is accreditation. Accreditation helps to validate students' transcripts should they need to transfer to another school and, "to most American international schools overseas, state-side regional accreditation is important" (Ortloff & Escobar-Ortloff, 2002, p. 22). With the highly mobile lifestyle of TCKs (Pollock & Ven Reken, 1999; Podolsky, 2004), transferring from school to school can indeed be a way of life; therefore it is important that their transcripts be easily read by other American schools. In the United States there are six regional accrediting associations responsible for accrediting public and private schools and universities (Western Association of Schools and Colleges, n.d.). They not only accredit schools throughout the United States, but each association is responsible for accrediting American schools in different regions of the world outside the US. In Southeast Asia this responsibility falls to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The WASC accreditation process is pervasive and includes the school purpose, governance,

school leadership, staff, school environment, reporting student progress, school improvement, and curriculum (Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 2006). In their accreditation process WASC considers the needs (as they see them) of international schools (Western Association of Schools and Colleges, 2006). The schools discussed in this paper rely on WASC as their accrediting association.

Generalizations about demographics in independent AISs are almost impossible, but most will agree that the non-American population is significant. Students from countries other than the US can make up one-third to two thirds of the student population (Gilles, 2001; Ortloff & Escobar-Ortloff, 2002). While the intention is to create an American educational environment, more often the result is quite unlike any school in the US or anywhere else in the world. One teacher describes it as "a little microcosm of the US, although it's not like any school in the States" (Coeyman, 2002, p. 14).

It is important to point out the complexity of the independent overseas AIS culture and diverse student body even when looking at a single school in Asia. Personally, I spent two years teaching in an AIS in Asia. Often my classes included Anglo-Americans, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Europeans, Chinese, Malaysians, Koreans, South Africans, Japanese, Indians, and Indonesians. The aspect of students with a variety of nationalities was complicated further by the fact that these labels themselves are questionable. For example: one of my former students whom I taught in an AIS is racially Anglo-American, lived in Fiji until he was 14, then moved to Malaysia where he graduated four years later, and only spent a total of 3-4 years in the US (each visit lasting three months to a year). Could I really call him an Anglo-American or even an American?

While many American schools abroad would like to see their students able to function in a variety of cultural situations (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004), their primary goal is to provide an American style education with English as the primary language of instruction. (Mackenzie, Hayden, & Thompson, 2003; Ortloff & Escobar-Ortloff, 2002). American parents want their children to have a schooling experience similar to what they would receive in the US while "many non-American parents recognize the benefits of receiving an 'American' education" (Ortloff & Escobar, 2002, p. 21). Usually the result is the creation of an interstitial culture or a culture between cultures. The first culture is what is brought from the US; this is the dominant American culture. The second culture comes from the influence of the local culture where the school is located. The intersection of the two is what Pollock and Van Reken (1999) call the *third culture*. The concept is similar to what Carmina Brittain (2002) speaks of in discussing *transnational social spaces*. Transnational refers to the crossing of two localities in two different nation-states. While physical borders have been crossed, connections to people, networks, and organizations across multiple national borders are sustained (Brittain, 2002). AISs overseas are parts of transnational communities where common ideas, beliefs, ways of evaluation, and symbols, are represented in a collective identity. There is a solidarity between individuals in these spaces that goes beyond family ties or simply instrumental relationships (Brittian, 2002).

It is quite possible for a young American expatriate to live in another country surrounded by another culture and rarely interact with nationals in the context of the local culture (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004). Cambridge and Thompson (2004) discuss the concept that some schools work to promote a "cultural bubble by isolating their children's educational environment from exposure to the local culture" (p. 165). According to

Cambridge and Thompson (2004), this is done to promote "rapid integration to the life of the national origin at whatever point their clientèle goes home" (p. 165). This presents an interesting situation for non-American students at the school. Students have the option of participating in this third culture space along with their American counterparts. They may spend up to eight or ten hours a day immersed in an American community. Remember, this group of non-American students at most AISs accounts for up to two thirds of the student body (Gilles, 2001; Ortlof & Escobar-Ortloff, 2002).

Culture Learning and Students' Acculturation

In order to better understand the lenses that will be used to view the students in this study, it is important to look at some definition of culture. Culture shapes the way we see the world and gives us our worldview. It is a set of shared assumptions, beliefs, and values (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999), includes belief systems, behaviors, traditions, and helps to define people's relationship with time, nature, and mode of activity. Most of these concepts are unstated assumptions at an almost unconscious level, and these assumptions function to preserve society as well as meet a range of human needs (Robinson, 2005). A group cannot be cohesive without the members of the group sharing a basic consensus in the deeper dimensions of culture. Simply copying outward behavior – like clothing or food preferences – will not keep a group together (Kohls & Knight, 2000).

While our response to cultural cues appears to be automatic and unconscious, it is important to recognize that culture is learned and is not somehow an inborn instinct. Parents or guardians are usually an individual's first teachers of culture. Children are socialized to participate in and contribute toward their communities as adults and to

fulfill the social requirements of their culture. Even the goals and strategies are themselves part of culture (Roer-Strier & Rosenthal, 2001). Socio-cultural reproduction theories suggest that schools themselves are agents that transfer culture from one generation to the next (Rong & Priessle, 1998). While these theories seem to be primarily concerned with transmission of socially stratified roles in society, they may assist in explaining how schools communicate other social rules, roles, and values.

Core Questions

This research project attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What are the American components of third culture spaces in the AISs? How have these American components been produced and reproduced and what are the effects on the educational process of non-American Asian students in AISs?
2. In the understanding of the counseling staff and teachers, what differences exist in the educational process between what non-American Asian students receive in the AIS and what they might receive in the typical local schools in their home countries?
3. Does the American school culture significantly conflict with that of the parents/home culture? If so, what steps do the teachers, counseling staff, and administration take to address the conflicts?

Chapter 2

Methodology

The Researcher

In this paper I speak not only as a researcher, but also as a teacher who has interacted with TCKs. I had the privilege of student teaching at an AIS in Quito, Ecuador. The experience only lasted for three months, but it was enough to give me a taste of what it was like to work with Third Culture Kids early in my career. From July 2000 until June 2002, I taught music in an AIS in Malaysia. While about half of the students at my school held American passports, about a third to one half of the student body represented many parts of Asia including Korea, India, Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and mainland China. My classes included elementary music as well as middle school and high school band. This provided a view of TCKs from ages 6 through 18. I continue to interact TCKs in my current position teaching English as a second language to middle school students. While I may be accused of "doing research in my own backyard," I believe that personal experience has helped me formulate some questions that may not occur to others without this experience. As I analyzed data, I found there were similarities to my personal experiences and added these associations to those expressed by the participants. The similarities in our experiences are worth noting because of the fact that I have taught in different cities, different countries, and different institutions from the participants. I have also clearly noted where I have shared personal experience.

The Use of the Term "Asian"

Each of the schools represented in this study educates students from every populated continent in the world. This is further complicated by the idea that a student who carries an Malaysian passport may be ethnically and culturally Chinese or what the participants refer to as Chinese-Malay. The participants themselves stated early in each of their interviews that the term "Asian" is very broad and addresses a wide variety of nationalities and worldviews. In this paper the word "Asian" will be used to refer of students that originate from many parts of Asia including Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, Mainland China, Taiwan, India, and Indonesia. This should not be understood to indicate that these countries all share a common culture and educational system. It should also be understood that individuals who grow up in these countries may not call themselves Asian. The term is used for the benefit of a primarily North American audience. When possible, the cultures and educational practices of specific countries will be discussed.

Participating Schools

Two AISs in Southeast Asia participated in the study. The Malaysian American School[1] is located on the mainland of West Malaysia. It's demographics include student carrying passports primarily from Japan and Korea (each about 20 of the total population). Only about eight percent of the students are from Malaysia with another three to four percent from other Asian countries such as Taiwan, mainland China, Thailand, India, and Indonesia. Only about 15 percent of the students are from the United States and another 5 percent are Canadian. The remainder of the student body is a mix of students from several European countries with few from Africa. About 40 countries are

1 A pseudonym

represented in the student body of The Malaysian American School.

The International Singaporean School[2] is located in Singapore. About 65 percent of the students carry American passports. The next largest group of students is from Korea and represents eight percent of the population followed by Singaporean students at five percent. About 300 other students come from mainland China, Taiwan, India, Cambodia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Thailand and other countries in the region. Still other students come from all over Europe, Canada, Africa, South America, and the Middle East. Over 50 countries are represented in the student body.

The schools offer an American curriculum for grades kindergarten through grade 12. Some students may only spend a year at the school while others may receive the majority of their elementary and secondary education from the same school. Some students speak primarily English at home while others may speak as many as three or four languages in the home. It quickly becomes apparent that the student population at any of these schools is complex, and one school's demographics could be the subject of significant study. This paper focuses on the Asian students at the schools while recognizing that this group alone is diverse. This group of students can be broken down into two subcategories: 1) Asian students from the community surrounding the school, and 2) Asian students from other Asian countries.

Research Design, Data Collection, and Data Analyses

This is a qualitative study. The procedure was to interview one school counselor and one teacher from each school who were working in overseas schools outside the United States at the time of the interview. Counselors and teachers in particular have significant insights into the cultural perspectives of these students as they teach these

2 A pseudonym

students on a daily basis. North American counselors and teachers were chosen because of their ability to express their viewpoints to a primarily western cultural audience. Because these individuals are located at a significant distance (Malaysia and Singapore), this researcher conducted the interviews by phone.

The interviews were recorded with permission. The interview data was transcribed and analyzed for common themes and concepts. Coding was done as themes emerged. Atlas.ti 5.2, qualitative analysis software, was used to assist in analyzing the data. I looked for general similarities among all of the participants' responses in how they understand third culture spaces. I also searched for similarities and differences in how each school may have consciously designed the third culture spaces that exist among the various schools. Several common themes in how the schools deal with parent/school culture conflicts emerged and will be discussed later. The focus was primarily on presenting the participants views and perspectives.

The following is the question protocol used in the interviews:

1. Why do Asian students from outside the country where the school is based choose to attend the school?
2. Why do Asian students in the local community choose to attend the school?
3. From your point of view, what are the purposes of the AIS? What are the goals and objectives for this school?
4. How is your school similar to a school in the US? How is it different?
5. In your opinion, how is the culture in your school different than what an Asian student from the local community around the school might experience in a local school?
6. In your opinion how is the culture in your school different from what an Asian

student from another country might experience in his/her home country?

7. What values does the school attempt to communicate to the students? Why? What are the means the school uses to communicate its values?
8. Speaking from your personal experience at this school, how are Asian students from the local community different from Asian students from other countries?
9. What kinds of social activities do Asian students participate in?
10. Do parents of Asian students from the local community participate in any school activities or organizations such as a parent/teacher organization? If so, what are those activities?
11. What does a parent/teacher or parent/counselor conference with an Asian parent look like? How might it be different from a conference in an American public school back in the US?
12. Do students from the local community seem to change or adopt American ideas and values when they attend the school over a period of several years? What does this look like for Asian students from other countries?
13. In your opinion, do students from the local community seem to change or adopt American ideas and values when they attend the school over a period of several years? Does this cause any problems in home and communities? Have students or parents talked to you about these problems? What does this look like for Asian students from other countries?

The Importance of the Study

The number of AISs outside the US continues to grow and will have an increasing effect on the international community. It is hoped that this study will increase awareness

of how the American school environment affects Asian students and encourage further study. It will contribute to the growing body of information on the effects of cross-cultural living on all individuals. Information will also be added to the growing body of knowledge about how culture plays into the development of a child.

Chapter 3

Results

The following is a compilation of the interview results. Each of the core questions is listed and below follows summary of the answers received. To protect the anonymity of the schools and the participants, the interviewees will be referred to by pseudonyms. Mr. Rose and Mr. Smith, a teacher and counselor respectively, both work at an AIS in Malaysia. Mr. Sims and Mr. Gavin, respectively a teacher and a counselor, work together in an AIS in Singapore. Mr. Smith is Canadian, but is familiar with the American school system. He finds the two systems very similar. The other three participants grew up in the United States and have work experience in schools in the United States.

Research Question One: What are the American components of third culture spaces in the AISs? How have these American components been produced and reproduced and what are the effects on the educational process of non-American Asian students in AISs?

To answer the above question, this study will first identify the American components and describe how they were produced and reproduced. Then this study will explain their effects on the process of non-American Asian Students.

The American Component

What is the American component in AISs? These schools clearly seek to create an academic environment where American students can learn similarly to the way Americans learn. This is important for American families that travel abroad. The high mobility American international families experience (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999)

creates a need for students to settle quickly into a new schooling situation; therefore the school is set up primarily with American expatriate students in mind. Orr and Beach (1985) maintained that "although overseas schools are diverse entities, they share two primary goals: to provide the best possible education for students, and to enhance the mutual transmission and integration of culture between the United States and the host country" (p. 397).

All of the participants generally agreed that their school cultures had an American component. One of the participants in this study stated that "there tends to be a western influence, certainly though, in quite a few of the things we do" (Mr. Rose)[3]. It was interesting to note that each participant was quick to say that what made their school unique were the multiple cultures represented in the school. "The value of having so many different cultures here is really what makes the school special" (Mr. Rose).

An American Private School

Participants were asked to compare AISs to public schools in the US, but they rarely were able to do so. More often the participants compared their schools to private schools in the United States as opposed to public schools. In fact, both participants referred to their school as being like an American private school a total of six times during the interviews. "I think the public school, the biggest difference would be the rates of our graduates who went to university... I just don't think the public schools in North America or Europe or Australia could compete with (our statistic of) 99% of the kids going to university" (Mr. Smith). They seem to feel that in American private schools there is a parental expectation that their children will go on to higher education and that carries over into the academic atmosphere.

3 Quotes from the interviews are unedited to allow for expression of emphasis and emotion.

Each of the subjects also compared the students to the kind of students found in US private schools – reasonably wealthy families that could afford to spend $10,000 - $20,000 on their children's education. These were also well-educated families with one or both parents having a university degree (Mr. Gavin). This is suggestive of a privileged environment and culture in the school. A higher socioeconomic class of families is common. Considering the cost of living in these countries, a privileged life is accessible to many families working for large multinational companies. Speaking from personal experience at the time of this writing, even a modest American salary of $30,000 a year would permit a family to live in great comfort in Malaysia. This would cover comfortable housing with many amenities, household help and childcare, funds for dining out several times per week, as well as significant disposable income for vacation and travel. The students at the school where I taught were able to have a prom (or their equivalent of a high school prom) at a four star hotel with a catered dinner. This was typical of the other AISs I had contact with in the county of Malaysia. It is difficult to tell without a separate study on American private schools, but it appears that the American component of the AIS is a very specific sector of American society – wealthy, privileged, and highly educated. At the same time it is important to recognize that many of these families from countries other than the US who are immigrating to these Asian countries represent the very same attributes of wealth, privilege, and education; therefore, to some extent the culture of privilege may simply be the result of the class of the student population regardless of their nationality.

Not only do the families often possess socio-economic privilege, but also of at least some political privilege and connection. In many countries local residents often

must have government connections in order to attend an American school. According to the participants and my personal experience, it takes special permission for a local resident to go to a private school not directly under government control in both Malaysia and Singapore (Mr. Smith, Mr. Gavin). The general rule in Malaysia is that a Malaysian resident (whether ethnic Malay, Chinese, or Indian) must attend a Malay school and must be taught in Malay at least part of the day (Mr. Smith).

An American Curriculum

Probably the most common American component that was mentioned by all four participants was the American curriculum. This tended to be the primary way they compared AISs to US public schools. They mentioned the similarities of the course offerings and indicated that this was a primary purpose of the school – "Essentially the purpose of the school is to provide an American-based education to ex-patriot students living abroad or, in this case, in Singapore. The programs that we offer are typical to what one would find in a suburban area of the United States" (Mr. Gavin). As for the actual courses, the students "will recognize the names of classes and everything, because they pretty much line up with what other kids are doing in the US" (Mr. Rose). The fact that both of the schools offer AP classes reflects an American set of courses. The similarities in course offerings were mentioned by all participants twenty times, so it is clear they believe this to be a prominent similarity. The reason for doing this was made evident. "The school does seek to offer an American curriculum so that families coming to us can hit the ground running and families that leave us when they go back are not a fish out of water" (Mr. Sims). For the many Asian students coming from other AISs this is also a benefit. TCKs are highly mobile (Pollock & Ven Reken, 1999; Podolsky, 2004) and academically it is important to be able to fall into a familiar curriculum wherever

they end up. Two of the participants said that at least some of the textbooks are the same or similar to what is found in the US. Course offerings must have at least some similarity for the school to be accredited as a US school by groups such as WASC so this must include US history. For Asian students moving from country to country and therefore from AIS to AIS, these schools clearly meet an educational need.

These schools meet the students' educational needs as long as the students stay within an American school system. However, if students try to return to their passport countries, many aspects of their American education (American history, American government) may seem irrelevant (Borden, 2005).

Aside from receiving an experience in an American curriculum that may be educationally irrelevant in their passport countries, Asian students may find the content they receive personally irrelevant. For example, Asian students may, and often do in my personal experience, ask why they must learn so much American history especially when American history is relatively short in comparison to other countries. I was asked this question by one of my Chinese students in a study hall. I could answer with the fact that it is a requirement for many American universities, but he did have a point in that the study of Chinese history (as opposed to the very generalized Asian history course offered at the school) may be of greater benefit for him as well as a few Americans. To be fair, it must be said that the two schools studied here offer several courses in Asian studies that would not normally be found in a typical American school in the US.

Athletics and Other Extracurricular Activities

The International Association of Southeast Asian Schools (IASAS) is an association that assists in providing international schools a forum to compete in extracurricular activities. The schools in IASAS are all AISs (International Association of Southeast Asia Schools, 2007).

The athletic programs in the schools studied are designed to be similar to what would be offered in an American school. "There is a certain similarity in the sports program in the sports offered. We have basketball, softball, soccer, and so forth" (Mr. Sims). Many of the students are involved in athletics – especially in smaller AISs in this region. The reason for this type of involvement are regulations by the IASAS. "Part of the IASAS program is that you must do every activity. So, for example, our first season will be cross country, soccer, and volleyball, and we have to put a boy's and a girl's team in each of those...with only 450 kids, we have to have everybody doing stuff" (Mr. Smith). Therefore, students are expected to participate in extracurricular activities and social activities. Also, many American colleges and universities expect to see these types of activities on a student's application, so it could be said that this aspect of the educational experience is something of an American component among AISs. The Asian students are often involved in these activities and in many cases "they are main stays on the team" (Mr. Smith). A counselor related the following: "I coach Varsity Girl's Basketball. I also coach the debate team... and it's an eclectic multicultural group of kids on those teams most definitely, and so are the other teams. We could not compete without the Japanese and the Korean and the Chinese kids and the Filipinos most definitely" (Mr. Smith).

Not all of the American components are always positive. One of the participants

described some of the negative behavior that goes on at sporting events at other international schools. He identified three other schools in the same region (Southeast Asia) as demonstrating behaviors like being pushy or screaming at a referee. He also mentioned that this did not occur at the school he was in. He did, however, state that this kind of behavior was something he considered a part of American culture. Two participants said that the Asian parents rarely attend sporting events.

The English Language

The use of the English language is a major component of the American culture in AISs. Language is used for ; it is used to teach, directly and indirectly, how people are to interact with each other and children learn what type of speech is socially acceptable and with whom they should use certain patterns of speech (Chaika, 1994). “Children become linguistically and culturally competent members of society through interactions with adults” (Park & King, 2003).

A level of English fluency often dictates what other activities in which the students may be involved. This is at least somewhat true for the athletic activities mentioned above. “You know, sports and extracurriculars. I would say compared to the American ones (students) it depends on their language background” (Mr. Sims). This is also true of the school social life in general. “A lot of students start coming and they haven't really established their use of English well, and they'll tend to hang out with their Korean friends or Japanese friends and not associate that much in their free time, their social time” (Mr. Rose). Of course this is only one aspect of language. More importantly, the language of instruction is English. Learning English at a very high academic level is vital to a student's success in any AIS. Each of the participants indicated the importance

learning the English language as an aspect of the American school environment. Most students succeed in this, but that is not always the case as is illustrated here by a counselor:

> We have to get them speaking English and realizing the importance of English. I don't know if you've tried to learn a second language, but it's hard. It's really, really hard. And there needs to be a definite will on the part of the parents and the kids. Now, sometimes there isn't. Sometimes it's much easier for them to just hang around with their friends and speak Korean all day other than in the classroom and go home at night and just speak Korean and then on the weekend, just speak Korean. And fair enough, we lose some of those kids. Lose in the sense that their English skills just aren't good enough and by the time they get to Grade 10, 11 and 12, their grades are starting to drop, and we basically counsel them out of the school, because we say we just don't have a good match here. I think it's fair to say that that's a small percentage of the kids. And I mean, that's life, too. The school doesn't have any hard feelings about that. We just say look, we're sorry, we tried this, we don't have a match; maybe you want to try somewhere else. It's that kind of a conversation. But for the kids that do come that are willing and the parents that are there to support them and to help them, boy, those kids just sail. They just fly. And they're bi- and tri-lingual, which to me is phenomenal. What a gift that their parents have given them. So these kids are focused and they're motivated and they're rocking and rolling. They're having a great time at The Malaysian American School. So, to answer your question, other than that small percentage of kids that basically either don't or can't meet that challenge of learning English, speaking, reading and writing at a very high level, other than that small percentage of kids, I think we're really successful with the ESL kids. (Mr. Smith)

This same participant also emphasized that the responsibility for dealing with the language difference is not totally placed on the students and their parents. “You need to recognize that they're not totally fluent, and so you have to make some efforts to meet their needs, too” (Mr. Smith).

“Language studies focus on naturally occurring interactions with and around children and analyze the ways that the community's norms are expressed... how children acquire ways of learning in their communities before they enter school” (Park & King, 2003, p. 1). The process of becoming a competent member of society is profoundly

affects language acquisition. The process of becoming a member of society is realized to a great extent through language (Schieffelin, 1990). Asian students in AISs become members of the society and culture of the school. They must become competent enough in the language and culture to function in the classroom if they are to succeed academically. Korean students do this in their own culture and schools. "In Korean culture it is important to use correct verb endings when speaking to adults and marking social status. Not to do so communicates disrespect and is considered very rude" (Park & King, 2003, p. 2). Teacher-student relationships are different in American schools and what is acceptable in the American classroom might be considered rude to a Korean student. Interlocutors need to be able to determine the relationship between themselves and speak to each other in a way that is socially acceptable. Children are able to do this as early as 2 years of age. (Schieffelin**,** 1990). Schieffelin (1990) is likely referring to children brought up in a monocultural setting as opposed to those who have had to learn competency in this area for several cultures.

The schools do have ESL programs and these AISs (as well as the two I have taught at) rarely accept new students who do not speak English after the 7th or 8th grade. All of those interviewed spoke of the need to learn English at a very high level in order to handle the academic material. The concept that it takes five to seven years to learn the English required for academic work is supported by the research of many (Freeman & Freeman, 2003; Cummins, 1981). All of the participants spoke of the students' need to use English outside the classroom in order to be successful in mastering the language. English is the primary language used in informal social situations in AISs – at least the ones in this study and in my own experience. It is possible for Asian students to find

others in their language group (Korean, Japanese, or Tamil, for example), but students are expected to develop their English by becoming involved in social situations where they must use English. As was mentioned before, those that do not may not have the overall language skills to graduate.

Cummins (1981) explored the relationship between what is commonly referred to among English language teachers as Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). To put it simply BICS is the language used in most social situations and CALP is academic language used in the classroom and higher learning. While these are two distinct language proficiencies, they are definitely related and should not always be treated separately (Celece-Murcia, 2001). It may seem unfair to penalize students simply for not relating socially in English, but students will struggle to survive in an academic environment unless they develop both. To be competent in English students must learn the rules for communication in situations outside the classroom (Freeman & Freeman, 2001).

The Concept of "Buying In"

Two of the teachers use the term *buy in* as in students *buying into* their education or *buying into* the school culture or *buying into* learning English (Mr. Rose, Mr. Smith). This process of *buying in* was associated with student success socially, academically, and especially with learning English. According to these two participants, this is a way the students need to change. While this is an interesting concept, this was not sufficiently explored in the interviews. This is an area for further study.

With the strong emphasis on using English in social situations, other questions may arise. To what extent does this create a disconnect between the language used at school and the language used with family? What about the language used to express

emotional needs or the language used to express needs to parents? However, this is an area for further study.

Teachers as an American Component

Another American component of the third culture spaces in AISs is the instructional staff. Both of the schools indicated that most of their teachers (up to 80%) were American. This reflects my personal experience. While AISs hire teachers from many nationalities, the pervading nationality is American. The teachers' nationalities are also limited by the fact teachers will most likely come from English speaking countries because instructional language is English.

Teachers instruct students, they participate in developing school policy, they're part of the school culture, they're authority figures, they interact with students outside of the classroom, they have lunch with the students, they socialize with them, they interact with parents, and they look for ways to communicate values to the students. Teachers have more interaction with the students than any other group in the school. Teachers demonstrate that it is acceptable to question authority. Students are "much freer to ask questions and to question the authority of the teachers and just not accept everything at face value.... Then they learn that the teachers actually encourage that sort of thing and thinking for one's self" (Mr. Rose). Teachers also teach by modeling how students are to relate to teachers. In both schools there were comments like, "outside of class time, there's a lot of fraternizing going on and a lot of socializing going on between the teachers and the kids" (Mr. Rose) or "The teachers go outside and eat at lunch with the kids. There's hardly anybody in the staff room" (Mr. Smith).

Teachers also communicate the learning process that is acceptable in the school.

This touches on how students are to relate to the teacher and other authority figures. "Asking questions that help them further understand things rather than just accepting what the teacher says" (Mr. Rose). The teachers promote a particular type of classroom behavior. Students are expected to be more active and assertive in their classroom interaction. This also tends to be associated with risk taking as part of classroom behavior.[4] "In an American based school system, kids learn very early on to test hypothesis, whether it's in the science classroom or in a Social Studies classroom or a math class, ask the why questions, search out the answers for what it is you believe and why you believe it. That's an encouraged sort of model. But you don't typically find that in a non-Western style education" (Mr. Gavin). There is the expectation and encouragement of more "give and take" interaction in the classroom (Mr. Gavin). This may be more of a general "western" influence or style of education. Yet this influence is part of American education and the participants view it as such. This is not to say that Asian teachers do not teach their students how to do research or to ask questions, but the process varies from culture to culture.

Values

Teachers, intentionally or unintentionally, communicate the values of the school culture. Each of the schools receives accreditation as an American school from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). WASC requires schools to develop a set of Expected Schoolwide Learning Results (ESLRs). These are to be incorporated into instructional practice by the teachers. As one participant put it, "Every

4 In a faculty workshop at the AIS, I taught at it was explained that rarely in Asian schools did the teacher ask questions in front of the entire class without being sure the students knew the answer. It was explained that answering a question incorrectly in many Asian classrooms was a serious loss of face. This is likely a gross generalization, but I offer it as some explanation of what I mean by risk taking in the classroom in this setting.

time a teacher creates a unit plan or figures out an assignment or something like that, they can probably tell you how they tie in with those ESLRs. Almost on a daily basis, they're probably covering several of those. That's in their day to day approach" (Mr. Gavin). These ESLRs are things like "think creatively and communicate effectively, and learn enthusiastically" (Mr. Rose). This is not limited to a set of guidelines for lesson planning. "What happens is often times these kids are coming to school with their parents' values and beliefs at some level, then they have a set of values and beliefs within the school that are generally passed down through the teachers.... As far as values, morals, those kinds of things that we're trying to instill in the children, I think what it comes down to is looking at those individual teachers that are leading the instruction in that class where they're from as far as their bent on teaching" (Mr. Gavin). Another participant commented that, "in the last couple of years our principal has stressed the core values of respect, responsibility, honesty, kindness and tolerance. Those core values are posted in every classroom. Often in faculty meetings and communication, e-mails, and so forth to the faculty we say please dwell on these and instill them in whatever way you can. They are worth while and worth inculcating" (Mr. Sims). This is not to say that other cultures do not value respect, responsibility, honesty, kindness, or tolerance. The point is not even that something we refer to as "honesty" is being taught. The point is that values are being taught in the classroom, by a largely American faculty. This begs the question of whose values? An American teacher is defining what it means to be "kind" or "honest." Are these values congruent with what these students have learned in their home cultures?

Effects on Asian Students

How does this affect Asian students in AISs? Both counselors said that culture

shock is the initial reaction to the environment. “What often happens is there's a culture shock for those children, because they see kids interacting with teachers in ways that they had not believed were possible or had not been accustomed to” (Mr. Gavin). Both also indicated that this was a reaction to the unfamiliar relationship that exists between teacher and student in AISs. More long-term effects tend to center around the student returning to his or her home country. “If they've spent a lot of time in a Western style system of schooling it's incongruent with what they're going to find back in the Korean model. They find it very difficult to adjust socially, intellectually. The rigor, the demand, the style, the flow. Everything seems disjointed for them and we find that a lot of kids end up having significant problems making that adjustment back” (Mr. Gavin). Students typically adopt what the teachers and counselors consider American views and values. “Again, the local students that we have from Singapore coming to [our school], I would say unequivocally yes, they adopt American ideas and values when they attend our school for a number of years. The reason they're doing that is because this becomes their culture. This becomes their worldview of what education should be, so with dress, codes of conduct, how they respond to adults, how they interact with their peers, different outlets that they decide to get involved with, whether it's athletics, other academic programs, musicals, that sort of thing” (Mr. Gavin). The government of Singapore recognizes this to some extent and will allow students to attend an AIS in their own country under these circumstances. “They come back to Singapore and they can apply with the Ministry of Education to petition to come to school here at [our school] because their child or children may have too difficult a time re-acclimating into the local school system” (Mr. Gavin). All four of the participants discussed this aspect of how the AIS affects or changes the Asian students that come to them. They will have a period of

readjustment as they return to their home culture. Reintegration is an important enough issue that the schools have procedures for helping the students deal with this transition. For example, one of the counselors said that, “We have panel discussions about what it's going to be like when you re-integrate back into your home country or when you go to a new country. We have a lot of conversations and pamphlets to hand out and show videos. I think it's in the forefront of the counselors' minds most definitely” (Mr. Smith).

The general effect of the social climate on Asian students also seems to vary according to the student's culture as well as according to how often the students have been outside the country of their parents. A teacher further explained this concept:

> It's comparable but there's a flavor of how a Japanese student would do this because they are more Asian. The Singaporean is to begin with more Westernized in a more international city. The Japanese are unto themselves to a certain extent. The Chinese Indonesian students who come here, I think have the perception that there are better opportunities here. The options are limited in Indonesia itself and some of those families are quite wealthy so money's no object so they come here for a living experience in a very livable city, Singapore and then have a very stimulating school experience that opens up avenues for university in America. With that Indonesian group, they're moving from Indonesia to Singapore and attending an American school so there's going to be a different flavor there from Singapore school to American school. (Mr. Sims)

The overseas AIS attempts to tie the American students into their culture, but from the experiences mentioned above the Asian students in the AISs are also tied to this American culture. Viewing TCKs through the lens that Cummins (1993) suggests would see these students as somehow alienated from their own culture. Though I have found TCKs question the extent of the culture that was “theirs” to begin with. Is there a “disruption of the integral transmission of culture to the next generation” (Cummins, 1993, p. 105)? In the results section it has already been discussed how many of these

students struggle should they return to a Korean, or Asian school system. “They find it very difficult to adjust socially, intellectually... (and) everything seems disjointed*”* (Mr. Gavin). In her comparison of the TCK framework and *kaigai/kikoku-shijo* studies, Podolsky (2004) points out that the struggles Asian students have when reintegrating into their passport country's school system have not gone unnoticed by the Japanese Ministry of Education. Action was taken to help the parents and their children, but not before a parent outcry in the media labeling the children as “educational orphans (kyoiku kimin).” According to Podolsky (2004), this negative perception of these children's international experience continued into the early 1980's until many of the children began speaking out and expressing the benefits of their international experiences. At the time of Podolsky's (2004) article, as many as 10,000 Japanese students return every year to the Japanese school system. Awaiting them on their return is a network of schools that provide special academic counseling and support. Many other countries, however, do not have such a network of support, including the US. Both schools in this study do offer programs and counseling for returning students and their families.

Part of the experience these students have as they return to their passport countries is what David Pollock and Ruth Useem refer to as *hidden immigrants*. They look, speak, and act like they are members of the culture, but their underlying cultural assumptions and unfamiliarities with certain aspects of the country often marginalize them (Pollock & Van Reken 1999; Useem, 1997; Lam & Selmer, 2004). For example, a young Korean student moving to Korea for the first time (returning in his or her parents' minds) or returning after an absence of many years may be completely misunderstood. “An outgoing, gregarious, confident, fun-loving, and inquisitive nature may not be appreciated in a nation where children are to be first and foremost successful and serious

students" (Borden, 2005, p. 75). The child is not perceived as a foreigner, but "as a poorly mannered and ill-adjusted Korean" (Borden, 2005, p. 75). In Hidden Immigrants: Legacies of Growing up Abroad, Bell (1997) includes narratives from several American passport holding TCKs. A brief excerpt may better explain the concept of *hidden immigrants* to a western or North American audience:

> There were situations where I was just like a bull in a china shop. I was just totally unaware. I missed the social cues. But at the same time, I had spent all that time with Americans in Korea, visiting friends military and missionary, so I thought I was completely American. But I was American with a difference. I knew I wasn't Korean, but I was completely comfortable in Korea. Seoul is the city where I am still the most comfortable – of any city in the world. And I love Korea. But I always knew I wasn't Korean, and I always thought of my self as American. But then coming to the States... I eventually began to understand that I wasn't quite the same as the other Americans. But it took me a while to see that. (p. 10)

On the other side of this argument it has also been stated by many who have studied TCKs that TCKs develop the ability to skillfully shift between cultures and languages in ways not nearly as easy for those who have spent their developmental years in a single culture (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999; Useem, 1997). In their study of British adolescents living abroad, Lam and Selmer (2004) suggest that "the general exposure to other cultures together with the expatriate adolescents' normal period of development should endow these young people with cultural and behavioral frames of references from all the cultures that they have been exposed to. This would, in effect, result in the expatriate adolescents being more culturally aware than their peers who were brought up in a single culture" (p. 361). Again, the benefit of a thorough understanding of two cultures learned during developmental years would seem to outweigh what some would consider negative effects. "One can note that it is expedient to be able to perform more

than one repertoire of behavioral norms if one lives in a city in which several codes are frequently encountered. Since the repertoires are socially constructed it could be that bilinguals might develop dual schemata and value-systems as they operate in two monolingual social contexts" (Pearce, 2003, p. 6). Each of the participants in the study has had their own children go through the TCK experience and was personally satisfied with the benefits.

"Expatriate adolescents may take into consideration all the values of the cultures that they have been exposed to before taking any action that is a general compromise for the parties concerned. It may be hard for expatriate adolescents to agree and commit to any one course of action as their international experience has taught them that they must refer to their specially developed frames of references to seek a course of action so that no one is offended. With this in mind, we believe that expatriate adolescents should be able to develop a special mental capacity as a result of being international" (Lam & Selmer, 2004).

A Unique Third-Culture Space

Much of the discussion on how the American school culture affects Asian students centered on the school culture. This makes it difficult to determine how much of the effect was due to the American component of the third culture spaces in the schools or the third culture space itself. It is also important to recognize that much of what was discussed in the previous section also reflects the unique third culture space created by the combination of cultures within the school. Each participant spoke about how his or her school was a unique combination of cultures. In all four interviews, the codes *school* and *culture* co-occurred a total of at least 19 times.

The international setting does, however, provide a bit more openness than may be

found in an American or Asian classroom. With a more heterogeneous student population discussions open up to include a broader range of viewpoints on things that are generally taken for granted like the *family unit*. The term *family unit* could be explored in much greater detail, as could many other concepts that are often simply "given" in a homogeneous cultural context (Mr. Rose). This presents a huge challenge to a teacher as well as the students in a situation where the "situation is (not, in this case,) governed by a single set of rules or norms shared by all participants" (Pratt, 1999). All of this assumes that the teacher is aware that American norms do not apply in the AIS setting and can work this into their teaching. The previous statement also assumes an American is teaching. In at least one of the schools US history is taught by teachers from the UK and Australia. Hopefully multiple perspectives in such a class would be appreciated. In this way a third culture space is a unique educational setting unlike any of the cultures that come together to create it.

Summary

Many American components of third culture spaces in AISs have been discussed. They include the English language, American teachers, an American curriculum, and extracurricular activities. Why do AISs have these American components? It has been stated several times before that the AIS outside the United States exists primarily to provide an education to the children of American expatriates. AISs attempt to produce an atmosphere similar to a US school culture, but many AISs agree that their schools are very different from any school in the US (Coeyman, 2002). This was discussed at length by all of the participants in this study. The third culture space created by the schools when merging multiple cultures is a clear limitation to the American model they are

trying to create. This is not, however, seen as a limitation of the school. Rather, it is seen as a benefit for all students.

It is important to explore why these AISs admit Asian students or any students who hold passports from countries other than the US. With one third (30 percent at the International Singaporean School) to two thirds (close to 80 percent at the Malaysian American School) of the student body originating from outside the United States this is a significant source of income. These students also benefit the schools' extracurricular activities. A school like the Malaysian American School would find it difficult to offer many of their extracurricular activities without the participation of these Asian students. The participants also believe that the Asian students enhance the multicultural nature of their schools. The American Malaysian School also has begun to offer full scholarships to a few local students for their final two years of high school. This act was described by Mr. Smith as “great press” and “a way to give an 'in' to this potential group of people coming to our school.” Certainly this promotes good will between the school and the local community. Clearly, admitting Asian students into the school has financial, political, and other benefits for AISs.

Each school's mission statement speaks to developing students with what they call an international perspective and help students develop a respect for other cultures. This motivation was confirmed by all participants. The participants expressed their belief that their schools promote an appreciation for all cultures and produce students who have more of a global awareness. Many other international schools place great emphasis on global awareness (Gillies, 2001).

Asian students clearly are affected by these components and this occurs during their developmental years as they form their identities and build an understanding

of social norms. They learn cultural rules that may be radically different from what they would learn in their passport countries. They develop ways of learning that may differ significantly from what is acceptable in their parents' countries. The participants agree that the students will struggle when they return to their passport countries, but the schools attempt to mitigate the difficulties students may face through counseling, group discussions, and parental discussions. However, it is important to recognize that these students are not victims. They are multilingual and have the ability to speak two, three, or more languages because of their experiences. Their parents and school have provided an environment that has taught them how to skillfully shift from culture to culture. Shifting cultures has become part of their identities.

Research Question Two: In the understanding of the counseling staff and teachers, what differences exist in the educational process between what non-American Asian students receive in the AIS and what they might receive in the typical local schools in their home countries?

In any organization, there is an "agreement, implicit or explicit, among teachers, administrators, and other participants on how to approach decisions and problems: the way things are done around here" (Owens, 2004, p. 179). While Owens is speaking more about the administrative side of the school, this agreement applies to "the way things are done" in an American classroom or at least a classroom in an AIS.

Teaching Methods

Teaching methods do not appear on the surface to have anything to do with , but students learn in a social environment. Teaching methods can be relational, and this was discussed by the all of the participants as a significant difference between Asian and American schools. "They do more discussion oriented type pedagogy here rather than just the lecture and test taking format, which I think you'll find probably more commonly

in the local schools, also schools in Korea and Japan and so forth" (Mr. Rose). The style of teaching is different. Students are socialized to learn differently in the Asian and American systems. They acquire different tools in each system. Asking questions and asking the right questions is a learning tool these students are given to function in the American educational system.

Student-Teacher Relationships

A different relationship exists between teacher and student than would be found in Asian schools. Again, this goes back to learning a different view and possible response to authority because "they're much freer to ask questions and to question the authority of the teachers" (Mr. Rose). "There's a great deal of respect, whether or not it's afforded towards the teacher or ingrained in the children, that this is how you will treat adults. In the local community here, there isn't a great deal of didactic conversation or give and take exchange that one would find in a traditional American based school setting" (Mr. Gavin). According to participants, many of the Asian students must be equipped with the tools for learning in the American classroom because they plan to continue their education in the US. One counselor discussed the advice he gives parents in this area:

> Now, if they say they want their son or daughter to go to a North American University, then we have a totally different conversation, because now I would talk about that they are going into a different culture; different not only from Japanese culture, but from [our school] culture. They're going to be going into basically an 80 to 90% culture, where all the kids are the same, and your, if I'm talking to the parent, I would say your daughter's English must improve. You've got to make more of an effort. She has to be talking in class. She has to be raising her hand, because she's going into that kind of a culture where that's expected, and she's going to be with aggressive kids who are going to be very pushy with their language and their wanting to get the time of the professor... And at the end, I'll say to the mom or dad, it's up to you. What do you think is best for your son or daughter? Do you want to go back to your home country? Everything's great. If you want to go to my country, you're going to have to make some changes, because I know what life is like back there.

> And right now, while your son or daughter is a great kid in your culture, they're not a great kid in this culture for these reasons. They're tentative, they're too shy, they don't speak enough, they don't do enough activities. We'll have that kind of a conversation. And I've found those conversations to be very, very fruitful... That's hard to change your cultural upbringing and your cultural morals and values. And there's nothing wrong with being shy and polite and quiet. The world needs those kinds of people. They are great kids. But in North America, that just doesn't cut it very well. (Mr. Smith)

Mr. Sims primarily considered two factors in assessing a student's ability to function in an American classroom: English language skill and students' ability to interact appropriately in what he considers an American classroom. It is easy to see why the teachers may view a lack of responsiveness, or unwillingness to speak up in class as a lack of understanding of how to learn in an American classroom or a lack of English skills. There are many reasons a child may not speak up in a class or participate as actively as others. These are two valid causes, but it is important to look for other possibilities as well. A more detailed discussion of Mr. Sim's comments will follow in the summary of this section.

Assessment

According to one participant, the concept of how students are assessed and graded differs between Asian and American schools. There is more emphasis on day-to-day learning than when "everything builds up to the final exams... That can lead to some trouble for those students because they can find themselves pretty easily far behind if they haven't been following through with their homework assignments and being responsible on a day to day basis and still kind of into that 'everything will be okay as long as I do okay on the final exam' type of approach" (Mr. Rose). This was mentioned several times by this particular participant.

Class Size

Difference in class size was also cited by Mr. Smith and Mr. Sims. Mr. Smith thought this to be between 40 and 50 students per class. While this may not directly affect students' perception of what a classroom should look like, it plays into the relational aspect of teaching. This makes a discussion oriented pedagogy possible according to two of the participants from different schools. It is important to recognize that while a particular method may be impractical in certain countries (large group discussion in this case), it does not follow that students will not develop skills such as critical thinking or the ability to challenge ideas presented in class.

Multiculturalism

All of the participants talked about how a major difference between Asian schools and the AIS was the number of cultures represented. All four felt that this was a positive difference and that it allowed the students to explore the values, languages, and beliefs of many more cultures than they would in a school in their own country or a local Asian school. “We're not just American; we have students coming from all over the world. I think rather than sitting in the classroom with students all from the same city or locality, here to have classmates and faculty from all over the world, that's got to make an impression and I would think it is a distinct advantage” (Mr. Sims).

The School Counselor

The counselors spoke about the difference in the role of school counselor. One said he was not sure that Asian schools had such a position. It was thought by the counselors that advising about career and university choice should fall to the teachers or administrators. Other problems considered the domain of counselors in American schools (learning disabilities, attention disorders, etc.) were thought to be handled by parents or at

home. The counselors indicated that there is a stigma about dealing with these issues outside the family.

Activities

It was said that Asian schools offer fewer activities. “We have a lot of kids who come -- a lot of parents come specifically for that, that they know their children are going to get a real sports education or activities education, too. We also have all the United Nations in debate, drama, music and our choir goes on trips to Europe and Australia, etcetera” (Mr. Smith). All four of the participants spoke about the variety of activities. The activities which were not available in the Asian schools, were said to attract Asian students to the American schools.

The English Language

The use of the English language was a major difference between the Asian schools and the AISs. Asian schools value English and in some cases use it for instruction. “Speaking for Malaysia, for example, there is a big, big push to hire native English speakers in schools. Big, big push. Another big push is to at least make the school half speaking Malay time and half speaking English time through the course instruction. Where before, the only English the kids would have received would have been in their English class. Now they're going into Math and Science will be taught in English” (Mr. Smith). The difference is use of language socially. Students who fail to use English outside the classroom tend to have a more difficult time fitting into the social networks and activities of the school. As was stated earlier, it is vital for the students to learn how to use English in the classroom for more than receiving instruction. There is a sense that learning how to use the language to actively pursue learning is both an

academic and social skill (Mr. Rose, Mr. Gavin). The other significant difference with using English in school is the pressure to learn it well enough to graduate. “We have to get them speaking English and realizing the importance of English. I don't know if you've tried to learn a second language, but it's hard. It's really, really hard. And there needs to be a definite will on the part of the parents and the kids ... And fair enough, we lose some of those kids. Lose in the sense that their English skills just aren't good enough and by the time they get to Grade 10, 11 and 12, their grades are starting to drop, and we basically counsel them out of the school, because we say we just don't have a good match here. I think it's fair to say that that's a small percentage of the kids” (Mr. Smith). This was said to be the case for both of the schools.

Social Development

Generally, social development that occurs in American schools was said to be something that the school intentionally sets out to do – at least more so than what may occur in a typical Asian school. It was made clear that Asian schools are concerned with social development, but they emphasize it less. This was considered a fundamental difference, but was only brought up directly by one school counselor:

> However, in an American or non-traditional Singapore school setting, one often finds that education, in terms of academics and text books and classroom learning is important, there's also another very big component to Western education, and that is the process, being able to interact and grow as a person. We offer a lot of programs here in the school that are not specifically tied in to academic rigor, whether it's the sports programs, the drama, the arts. You don't often find those in local Singaporean schools, or for that matter, local schools in Saudi Arabia or China. It's very much driven by your reading, your science, your math. Those are the key components that you need to learn. And we try to focus on those areas, but we also really believe it's important to focus on social/emotional development as well... Sometimes that's really hard for parents who are coming from the local system to really understand. They'll see their children playing and they're saying wait a minute here, I'm paying a lot of money for my child to go to school here. Why are they spending 35

> minutes at lunch-time playing? Why aren't they studying? And you have to try to explain to them that the process that we believe is important for educating children not only encompasses academic learning, but social/emotional development that takes place outside of the class. So I think those are a couple of the fundamental differences. (Mr. Sims)

Rigorous Academics

Both Asian and American schools value academic rigor; but the approach is different. Asian parents tend to equate academic rigor with the amount of "homework, and lots of it" (Mr. Gavin). Some parents even complain that there is not enough homework (Mr. Gavin). Academic rigor in the American school is more likely to equate with a strong "didactic approach [alongside] school life and social/emotional development" (Mr. Sims).

The social/emotional development and interaction with teachers was said to change how students from even the local culture view their peers and other adults. "They're going to start to view their peers differently, and their peers will start to view them differently simply because of the interaction they're having for those six/seven hours a day at their schools, as far as interactions with teachers, as far as interactions with peers at those schools. They are being, for lack of a better term, inundated with different cultural practices and norms from what they would find in a traditional school setting" (Mr. Sims).

Summary

The participants focused on the differences between the AIS and the schools where Asian students from outside the United States would attend. They spoke about class size, student-teacher interaction, the role of the counselor (or the fact that the school would have a staff position of "school counselor"), activities outside the classroom such

as sports or music, and they spoke more about the use of the English language. While this is not the same as discussing the acculturation process, it does give insight into how students come to understand the concept of education differently than in their passport countries. Students learn what a classroom is supposed to look like. They learn how to address a teacher and what is appropriate teacher-student interaction for both inside and outside the classroom.

Asian teaching methods were sometimes viewed negatively or somewhat stereotypically. To be specific, Mr. Sims spoke about what he viewed as a "rote learning type of thing." He also viewed students that do not speak out in class, ask questions and "be aggressive with their language" as needing to improve their English. He also indicated that these students may not be acculturating to the American educational setting or at least they do not have the social and language skills to succeed in a university in the United States. It is important to ask why these students do not appear up to the task.

Student motivation is a significant factor. Students may not be fully invested in their education; rather, they are trying to succeed to please their parents. "Individual student motivation may be displaced by the need on the part of the student to show a return on the parents' investment. 'Showing a return' and doing sufficiently well to satisfy parental wishes, may not necessarily result in excellence, but in fact may result in doing the minimum to pass" (Clark & Gieve, 2006, p. 66). As sojourners in the AIS and the country they are in, they may see the temporary nature of their situation as a reason not to "buy into" their education. If their intent is to return to their country of origin they may "demonstrate less acculturation" (Tomich, McWhirter, & Darcy, 2003, p. 25). "As sojourners and not long term residents, such learners may not be able to make the necessary investment in their language studies, compared to other students whose future

livelihoods are more closely linked to their academic performance and linguistic competence in English" (Clark & Gieve, 2006, p. 66). Other reasons a student may appear "tentative" or "shy" may have more to do with their initial experiences in English if those initial experiences were negative. "Continual failure to be able to carry out previously taken for granted tasks could result in a loss of confidence to speak the language which in time may lead to a display of reticence which manifests itself as silence, minimal responses, or extreme soft-spokenness" (Clark & Gieve, 2006, p. 68).

Students may not be demonstrating their language abilities in class even though they may not have deficiencies in English. Do they feel uncomfortable if they speak English with an accent? This could be especially problematic for Singaporeans, Malaysians, and many Indians attending the schools. English is one of the national languages of Singapore and it is widely spoken in Malaysia; however, the English commonly spoken among those who live in either of these countries is a local dialect. In Singapore this is referred to as *Singlish* by most Singaporeans (Rubdy, 2001). It is unlikely for a teacher or other students to ridicule English spoken without an American accent since it would be rather commonplace in an international setting and would be quickly disparaged as intolerant behavior. This does not mean that an American accent does not carry privilege in the AIS. It is unlikely that this would be quickly recognized by many of the North American staff at an AIS since "for native speakers of mainstream English, who are privileged to be at the top of the global linguistic hierarchy of power, it is particularly difficult to imagine a situation where one's on language is stigmatized and threatened, or a situation where English is appropriated to express a different world view" (Kubota, 2001, p. 60). Such stigmatization may not even come from within the

school. If Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong would publicly suggest that even Singaporean sit-coms should avoid the use of Singlish (Rubdy, 2001), most Singaporeans would be aware of the privilege of an idealized Standard English. Teachers in the AIS need to be conscious of this.

It is very easy for teachers in AIS in Malaysia and Singapore to make generalizations about Asian culture and feel justified. While these teachers live and work in Asia, it is important for them to continue to take into account the amount of time they spend in the American cultural bubble themselves. They may have closer contact with Asian schools than teachers in the US or Canada, but even these teachers admit that they have never taught in a Korean, Chinese, Malaysian, or Singaporean school. This makes it easy for them to essentialize Asian cultures. Teachers may need to "engage in a critique of cultural difference" (Kubota, 2001, p. 11). What they are perceiving as cultural differences may be more related to a perceived difference in power and authority and may have little to do directly with culture. Perceptions of power and authority very from culture to culture. Teachers in AISs need to ask themselves difficult questions. Are students not being "aggressive with their language" and challenging the teacher because they are being polite Asians or do they feel threatened by the fact that the teacher is an American like the other American students in the classroom and therefore they may not be able to challenge the teachers authority as equally? Do the Asian students believe they are expected to be shy, quiet, and non-confrontational in their learning style as opposed to students from the United States? Are the American students who rarely respond in class thought of as shy and polite in the same way as the Asian students? To be fair it must be said that each of the participants spoke about the dangers of generalizations and admitted to having little experience in an Asian school system. They were all hesitant to

make generalizations and qualified them as such.

Educational institutions in different countries will base their discipline structure and curriculum on the specific needs of their society. This will have its roots in both the history of the country as well as the current social and political climate. The AIS will base its instructional methods and curriculum based on the perceived needs of American society and culture. These perceived needs will likely be quite different from the perceived needs of other countries and cultures. American schools have offered a wide array of extracurricular activities and have often included some sort of play time or recess during the school day. This may not be the case in other countries and cultures. It does not show that Asian culture does not value the importance of free play, athletics, music, or other activities. It is likely that Asian societies have chosen other institutions to care for these needs instead of the school. American schools may this as educating the "whole child" as they attempt to meet the social needs of students. Other school systems may certainly be interested in their students' social development, but may approach it in a different way or may not consider providing athletics, training in music, or other extracurricular activities their responsibility.

As was stated earlier, another major difference is the fact that the students are sitting in class with several teachers that are not of their nationality (Mr. Sims). This is seen as an exciting and broadening experience. This goes back to teachers, who are a major portion of the American component of third culture spaces in these schools. The concept of teacher-student relationships dramatically changed during the formative years of a students' life. This could prove to be an advantage for any student who has the experience of an education from multiple perspectives.

Research Question Three: Does the American school culture significantly conflict with that of the parents/home culture? If so, what steps do the teachers, counseling staff and administration take to address this?

Role Perception

The cultural conflicts that arise sometimes have to deal with the things the parents feel are not acceptable to discuss with the school or people outside the family. This often comes up when dealing with "attention issues some children may have" and the "stigma in a lot of Asian cultures about counseling and getting extra help and having a need to come in and talk to the school authorities and that sort of thing... therefore, there can't be anything wrong with my son or daughter that we can't fix at home. So I think they are perhaps less forthcoming in sharing information about family issues and those kinds of things, and also the educational needs that their son or daughter may have" (Mr. Rose). "Parents may not be willing to consider medication to modify a students behavior or attention problems" (Mr. Sims). According to Mr. Sims, to bring this up can create a situation where the parent feels a need to save face. Instead this would be a topic to discuss with the family doctor and to be kept within the family as it is a reflection of a problem with the parents as well as the child.

When considering options for further education and career goals, there can also be a conflict. The school may try to counsel the parent to have the child make these choices when the home culture says this is primarily a parental decision. "When it gets down to things like advising for college and that sort of thing, parents do tend to get very involved with their son and daughters' decisions and will, in many cases, be quite overbearing and make a lot of the decisions for the child. I always try to encourage them to remember whose future it is we're talking about here and hopefully the student can make some of the decisions for themselves. Most of the time, that is met with pretty stern reaction as

well. So that's a cultural difference" (Mr. Rose). On the surface these conflicts would seem to be explained by the fact that parent and school expectations are not the same. The counselor seems to expect that he would help the child negotiate higher education with the help of the parents. The counselor assumes this is a "cultural difference" and it may well be. Parents in some cultures may have a tendency to assume that the child's future education and career choice is more of a family decision and there may be less room for negotiation on the part of the child.

At the same time, if the parents (or extended family) are paying $10,000 to $20,000 for the child's education they may feel entitled to be more heavily involved no matter what the culture. This is their investment. This concept may not be unusual in American middle class families living in the United States under similar conditions.

A conflict that has come up in recent years for one of the schools centered around the practice of some Korean parents sending their children away to another country for a high school education. Often this is because the child is not doing well in his or her home country school which causes embarrassment for the parents. The solution they find is to send the child away. They can claim their child is away receiving a prestigious American education and no one needs to know how the child is actually performing. These children tend to resent the fact that they have been sent away. Moreover, they have little supervision in their living situation, and there is no parent available to discuss ways for changing the situation. Rather, the children are placed in an apartment to live on their own with minimal supervision of a relative or an individual who is paid to make sure the child's basic needs are cared for. In this case, when the school tried to contact the parents, they found them either unavailable or in a situation where they cannot help to modify the

child's behavior in ways that the school believes necessary. The American system tends to view the relationship between the school and home as a partnership with the parent in a more participatory role. It is important to point out that the children in this situation were not the norm and most students at the school had parents who lived in country.

Conflict over Male-Female Relationships and Religious Values

Two of the four participants mentioned the fact that the school culture with its mix of cultures provides an atmosphere where male/female relationships develop without parental approval. The conflict is usually because the other person is of a different religious or other background in which the parents disapprove. Often these feelings and relationships are hidden from the parents. Sometimes there is also tension because of religious practices and some students have difficulty participating in activities their friends have more freedom with. One of the counselors discussed how home-school conflict happens with some of the Muslims in this region.

> The Malays are Muslim, and values don't always mix with the looser kind of American value system and with the pretty strict Muslim family. So I think that there are sometimes difficulties there for the students to see a lot of stuff going on around them and not being able to participate or not choosing to participate in that sort of thing. Maybe the male/female relationship is kind of open and demonstrative and that sort of thing which is real different than what you'd find in a stricter Muslim type of education. It's hard to say if they kind of desire the kinds of things that the Western students are doing or saying, or looking at it with less than envy, I guess. Another thing that certainly stands out, the girls wear head scarves and during Ramadan, the Malaysian students are fasting and so a lot of the people who are athletes and that sort of thing are in a whole different situation and they are not allowed to eat or drink during the daylight hours. I think, in some cases, our Muslims under those guidelines are maybe jealous of the students who are not expected to do that kind of devotional activity. (Mr. Rose)

Related to this is the tension parents sometimes feel when their children are being influenced in ways they don't agree with. The influences may come

from school policy, teachers, as well as peers. The situations and influences often arise as the child is participating in sports or other activities. Mr. Sims spoke to the feelings parents have about the fact that many of these activities require travel to other schools in other countries, and parents are hesitant as they consider their children traveling to meet students from unfamiliar places.

To what extent do parents feel threatened by their children learning different values or being exposed to values different from their own? As children mature they often question the values of the parents and may rebel against them as they begin to assert their own identities. This is both a cultural issue and a child developmental issue.

What is a Good Education?

The subject of difference in perception of rigorous academics was discussed earlier so it will only be briefly mentioned here as an area of conflict. All four participants spoke of Asian parents sending their children to an American school because they believe that it will provide future opportunities because of a rigorous academic education. A significant number of the Asian parents tended to have a different view of rigor than the school, which included many hours of homework, many papers to write, and many tests to study for to prepare for important entrance exams into universities. While there is a significant amount of homework, it is usually less than what the parents expect and many complain because they do not believe the children are getting enough (Mr. Sims). Both the parents and students go through a period of adjustment as they better learn what the school's expectations are in this area.

Language Barriers

The language can be a barrier between the school and the parents if they do not speak English well. During conferences the schools try to bring in a translator, but the student sometimes need to fulfill this role. Both schools indicated it is rare to need translation during a parent/teacher conference. Most of the Asian parents speak English well enough to handle a parent/teacher conference. Generally, this did not come up as a common situation for conflict.

Internal Conflict

A source of conflict with the home culture does not always result in conflict with the home or the parents. Sometimes the conflict is within the students as they return to their own countries. This process is best illustrated by the following quote from one of the counselors:

> Most often, the kids that we service internationally, their parents have not spent a significant amount of their developmental years traveling to different countries and growing up. They may have lived abroad the last 20 years as mom and dad, but mom and dad are also in their mid-40's. So during those critical years of development, the teenage years, the early childhood years, they were born and raised in a certain cultural construct that didn't change appreciably. But their children, now who are growing up internationally and abroad, are going through lots of developmental social/emotional changes in the culture that they're being raised (which) often times is changing markedly, because the parents are moving on to different posts. For example, some of the research I did just a few months ago on depression among international students, I found that the average stay for middle school students, the 375 kids that I worked with, was about 3 1/2 years, and the average number of schools that they had attended was something like 4 plus. So these kids are moving around quite a bit and when that happens, they're going to be interacting with other students from other countries in other international schools and they're going to be taking the things that they're learning in those cultures at those schools and bringing them home and asking mom and dad why. Why do we do things differently? Why do I have to act like I'm Korean, but I'm not really feeling Korean? Why do I have to act like an American kid? Why can't I be an international student and have more tolerance and have more respect? Why, mom and dad are you harping on this person because of

> the color of their skin? I work with them or I want to date them or I don't see any problem with this. You know, all of the stereotypes that we tend to have about different ethnicities from America are based on our cultural constructs while growing up in America. But these kids don't have that. And that can be real problematic. (Mr. Gavin)

All four participants recognized this as a source of personal conflict for the students. Both schools also offer programs to prepare students to return to their home cultures. "We have panel discussions about what it's going to be like when you re-integrate back into your home country or when you go to a new country. We have a lot of conversations and pamphlets to hand out and show videos. I think it's in the forefront of the counselors' minds most definitely. Having two kids just go through the school, I think [our school] does a very, very nice job of this, handling any of the potential dangers of a Third Culture Kid" (Mr. Smith). As is indicated here, this is not only a conflict for the Asian students, but it occurs for the American students as well. This particular teacher also had dealt with this on a personal level with his own children and this is common for teachers at AISs.

The Importance of Communication

The schools attempt to communicate specifically with parents in the larger Asian communities that are represented in the schools. Both schools have grade level coordinators. For the parents who do not speak English fluently, these people "help with interpretation of notices that they're getting and announcements and that sort of thing" (Mr. Rose). In one school each grade level has a Korean and Japanese representative to help foster communication between the parents and the school administration.

Students Handling Conflict

Sometimes the conflicts are handled by the students themselves as they have developed cultural skills as a result of being raised in a third culture environment. The following anecdote illustrates this a bit more clearly:

> A Taiwanese mother just the other day, I had a chat with her and I complimented her on her son who is very mature and so forth. The mother said what the son will do is intervene as a kind of a counselor almost to her in her interactions with her daughter who I believe is in middle school. So the daughter is testing a bit but this high school boy who is in grade 11 will sit down and say okay now mom let me explain, this is what my sister is saying, this is why she wants to do it, and this is how she's thinking now. And so, he was serving as the arbiter and she was somewhat amused in a way but also appreciative that he was taking that role. I think she felt that was a necessary one that maybe she needed to be clued in about what was going on. (Mr. Sims)

Summary

Why is there conflict between the AIS and the culture of the parents or the home culture? All of the participants expressed that, in their view, the AIS culture differs significantly from the culture of the parents or their home culture. Is it merely that the school's values and the values of the home are not the same? On the surface that would appear to be the case in many areas particularly when speaking of family values and religion.

In a study of second-generation Haitian youth, Stepick et. al (2001) referred to the "alienation of second-generation children from their parents has been called cultural dissonance, that is, a situation in which parents and children possess dissonant cultural views of appropriate ideas and behavior" (p. 233). This very well could explain the inner conflict Asian students at the AIS may experience. Cultural dissonance could be experienced even by Asian students who attend the school from the local community since they are exposed to behaviors and values very different from what they experience

at home and in their local communities for the majority of their day. There is pressure by the AIS for them to buy into the AIS community. Even though this may be a third culture space with a variety of viewpoints and values, it may not fit into the monocultural worldview they experience at home even in a city as diverse as Singapore.

How does the school deal with home-school conflicts? Communication was mentioned as a primary means of resolving and preventing conflict. To some extent this seemed a little one sided. The grade level coordinators were said to facilitate communication between parents and the administration. Much of their responsibility in this area was said to be translating information for parents who did not speak English well enough to understand newsletters and information disseminated from the school. They were also supposed to present the concerns of various culture groups to the administration, but it was not clear how often this happened or how administration acted on it. It is very important to point out that at least one school was run by a school board made up of individuals in the community elected by the parents. This may be an area where some of the Asian families would have a voice in the school. It should also be mentioned that there was little research or questioning into how the schools were governed.

Mr. Sims and Mr. Rose believed that families who had experience living internationally made the conflict easier to mitigate. The longer the experience the more well adjusted the children and the parents and the more familiar they were in dealing with AISs. What other factors could make this easier? Children and spouses experience a great amount of stress in international moves and living (Harvey, 1985, p. 14). Would families under stress be more likely to have conflicts with the school? How might the rate of

conflict in Asian families compare with newly arrived American families?

Both schools anticipated the conflict and continued to develop ways of dealing with the conflict. This was done through school counselors, teachers, as well as by having parents work together with the school to understand the conflicts. As the final anecdote illustrates, students also participate in dealing with the conflict. While this conflict will likely continue, its effects will most likely be dealt with best as teachers, counselors, parents, and students come together and learn how to work through it.

Chapter 4

Limitations of the Study

The study was small and only included a handful of participants. Much of the information gained was anecdotal and it is difficult to know whether the results could be applied to a larger population or even generalized to other TCK populations.

While the study seemed to narrow in terms of its specific population in a specific situation, it may be helpful to narrow the study down to only one of the core questions to get more in-depth insights. Comparing the process between AISs and local Asian schools (or simply a school in Korea) could be a study by itself. The area of language is a large field. A separate study on language with this population in this environment could yield more significant information. As it is, this study merely demonstrates the needs in these areas for further study.

Much of the information in this study indicated that the teachers are a primary source of the Asian students' in the school. It is only natural to question whether this is the case or if it is simply the result of talking to the teachers and not the students. To what extent do the students learn from and acculturate to the school culture by interacting with other students? In Olsen's (1996) study of immigrants in a California public high school, the teachers tried in various ways to communicate the concept that bilingualism was an "asset and is something students should strive for" (p. 15). However, "it appear(ed) that very few immigrant students put any premium or value upon continuing to develop their native tongue" (Olsen, 1996, p. 15). Something was happening outside the classroom and

outside the teachers' realm of influence and that is likely the case in the AIS. Further study must include interviews with students themselves as well as with parents and others in the school community.

Finally, the use of counselors and teachers as the only source of information is a weakness in the study. Naturally it is going to be difficult for such workers to speak objectively about their schools. As a former American expatriate, I know that working and living in a cross-cultural situation is highly stressful. If the work situation does not provide a positive and rewarding experience it is very difficult to remain in one place. Such people will either have very positive experiences to share or they will leave. A more critical approach would need to include input from students, parents, and possibly even workers from the local community.

Chapter 5

Recommendations for Further Research

There are a number of ways this study could be continued. A larger sampling of teachers and counselors could be used from the same part of the world. There are a number of international American schools to choose from in the region. The cost of international phone calls and the fact that minors themselves would not be included makes this a very feasible option.

It was difficult to compare local Asian students with those from other countries because of the limited number at the school. It would be helpful to find other countries where this is not so much the case. Because certain aspects of the TCK phenomenon can be generalized, it may be justifiable to attempt the study with another population where governmental restrictions do not apply as much.

At some point, it is important that the students speak for themselves. They are, after all, the focus of this study. A first step in this direction would be to interview university students who have attended AISs outside the US. This would allow the researcher to perform a quantitative study with a questionnaire that could be complemented with qualitative interviews.

Further research may also include questionnaires given to several AISs. A much larger population could be studied and some statistical information could be added to the body of research. Eventually this could be combined with a more detailed study involving on site interviews with students, parents, teachers, and administration.

The term *buy-in* was used by two of the teachers. What similarities might the term *buy-in* have with something like acculturation? If buying into the school culture and the use of English was seen as so vital to student success, student acculturation in AISs may be an excellent direction for further study.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Recommendations to Schools

It would appear that the AISs are doing a good job with Asian students, but there is always room for improvement. The area that seemed to have the most impact on students was their adoption of the English language for both social and academic purposes. When Asian students did not have a high degree of success with English in all areas, they struggled. I would suggest taking a more critical look at the reasons for student silence or shyness in classrooms. This should include analyzing student behavior across multiple classrooms. If a student is habitually silent in only one class, the problem may be outside the realm of culture. If testing demonstrates a student is not lacking in English skills, AISs should not be so quick to jump to the conclusion that culture is at the root of the problem.

The participants made generalizations about Asian schools and the teaching methods used in those schools, yet also said they had little direct experience in those schools. Teachers should explore opportunities to experience local schools firsthand – at least in Singapore and Malaysia. As one who has taught in the overseas setting I understand this would be difficult with scheduling and the numerous stresses on teachers in the international setting. At the same time I managed to find several opportunities to work with local schools in Malaysia and found it vastly worth the sacrifice of time. Working with local Malaysian students in a Chinese-Malaysian public school gave me

interesting insights into my own students as well as cultural educational practices in general.

AISs should continue to analyze why there are conflicts and ask if this purely a cultural phenomenon. With regards to conflicts over future career and educational decisions, is it possible that parents feel some sort of power disparity and in turn resist the counselors suggestion of having the student take a greater role in decisions in career and further educational decision-making? Do parents and students of other nationalities feel empowered by the school counselor or does something cause them to feel as though they do not have the autonomy they expect?

For students that do not buy into the school culture it is important to continue to ask why, even if it is only a small percentage of students. Is it language ability or is it resistance to a parental decision to move with little or no involvement of an older child in the decision? It is good that these schools consider each student on a case-by-case basis. It is, however, important to look for trends in general. If trends arise, it is vital to ask why might certain groups struggle.

It would be important to take a second look at the term *buy-in.* What does it mean? Perhaps a better term to use would be *acculturation*. This term may more accurately describe the intent of the school as they assist students in becoming part of the school culture. Acculturation models would allow the process to be analyzed in terms of culture, socialization, and look at how the student chooses to adapt to the school.

Final Remarks

Unless globalization ends, the TCK phenomenon is not likely to disappear. Globalization is the cause of these students being where they are. “Globalization detaches social practices and cultural formations from their traditional moorings in national

territories. Globalization decisively undermines the once imagined neat fit between language, culture and nation" (Suarez-Orozco, 2001, p. 346). While Suarez-Orozco was referring to immigrant students in the US, it is not a stretch to apply this statement to Asian students in AISs, or even American students attending school in Brazil. That is not to say that these students are victims of globalization and that their growing up experiences in third culture spaces is harmful. In fact they may have a better understanding of the world than the adults that take them there. "The claim that those who can achieve multiple identities, indexed by multilingual and multicultural sensibilities may be best suited to thrive in the post-national space sounds almost banal by its obviousness" (Suarez-Orozco, 2001, p. 358). However, whether these TCKs will achieve healthy multiple identities will largely depend on how well the school and family work with these children.

Appendix

AIS – American international school: For the purpose of this paper this refers to schools with an American curriculum that are located outside the United States.

ATCK – Adult Third Culture Kid: ATCKs are adults that have grown up with a Third Culture Kid experience. This term refers to the concept that adults often carry their third culture experiences into adulthood and is incorporated into their identities as adults.

BICS – Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills: Language used in social situations and for common interpersonal communication.

CALP – Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency: Language used in a classroom or educational environment.

DODDS – Department of Defense Dependent Schools: These schools provide an education for the children of those who work for the Department of Defense while they live for an extended term overseas.

ESL – English as a Second Language: Strictly speaking this refers to a course of study. In this paper it is often used to apply to students who speak English as a second language whether or not they are taking a class specifically to learn English as a second language.

ESLR – Expected School-wide Learning Results: Schools accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges must develop guidelines that are to be incorporated into instructional practice. These guidelines should be part of lesson planning, daily instruction, as well as co-curricular activities.

Hidden Immigrants – These are individuals who may look, speak, and act like they are members of a culture, but their underlying cultural assumptions were developed

living outside that culture. Their unfamiliarity with certain aspects of the country often marginalizes them.

IASAS – Interscholastic Association of Southeast Asia Schools: This is an association of six schools in southeast Asia that provides for sports, cultural, and leadership activities between member schools (Interscholastic Association of Southeast Asia Schools, 2007).

Language – Language studies focus on naturally occurring interactions with and around children and analyze the ways that the community's norms are expressed; how children acquire ways of learning in their communities before they enter school (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984).

Passport Country – This term is used to denote the country a student's parents consider their home country or country of origin. Literally, it refers to the name of the country printed on the student's passport, which they may have little knowledge or memory of.

TCK - Third Culture Kid: A TCK is an individual who, spending a significant part of their developmental years (usually the years before their 18th birthday) in another culture other than that of their parents, develops some sense of belonging to both the host culture and the home culture, while not having a sense of total ownership in either. Elements from both (or multiple) cultures are blended, resulting in the third culture. (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999, p. 19)

WASC – Western Association of Schools and Colleges: This is one of six regional associations that accredit schools and colleges in the United States. Each association is also responsible for accrediting American international schools located in other areas of the world. WASC is responsible for the schools in

southeast Asia.

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